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## Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

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November 19, 2003

Office of Conservation and  
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Mr. Troy Brady  
Surface Transportation Board  
Case Control Unit  
1925 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

RE: Docket No. AB-167 (Sub-No. 1095X)

Dear Mr. Brady:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed MOU concerning historic documentation regarding the abandonment of the Enola Branch rail line in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) understands that the entire line is eligible for inclusion on the National Historic Register and that there is significant interest in preserving this historic asset and converting it to a public trail.

DCNR as a matter of policy has long advocated for both the preservation of historic assets and the conversion of abandoned rail lines to public trails. Regarding the latter, the Department in the past seven years has provided \$20.5 million in grant funding. DCNR funding would be available for stabilization, restoration, and maintenance of the historic structures associated with the rail line, as well as for the construction of the trail with necessary support assets such as parking lots.

The Department's previous position, which we maintain today on the Enola Branch, is that we support philosophically and would support financially the conversion of the rail line to a trail. Such support would be predicated, however, on the endorsement by the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners and the townships through which the line passes for its conversion to a trail.

Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of rail-trails, and our experience in working with hundreds of municipalities on rail-trail projects is that these facilities became significant public assets that not only contribute to the quality of life of local residents but also contribute to the economic sustainability of the community. We have also found that those initially opposed to a rail-trail project frequently became the rail-trail's biggest supporters once the project is completed and its "real life" values seen.

In conclusion, DCNR believes that the historic assets of the Enola Branch may be preserved through its conversion to a rail-trail, and DCNR is positioned to provide financial assistance if it is the will of county and local elected officials.

Sincerely yours,

Richard G. Sprenkle  
Deputy Secretary for  
Conservation and Engineering Services